



Contractors & Tradesmen Working Indoors

What to Do if You Find Vermiculite and Asbestos In a Home or Business

Environmental Resource Specialist – (406) 291-5335

EPA Information Center - 501 Mineral Avenue, Libby, MT 59923 - (406) 293-6194

DEQ Troy Information Center – 303 N. Third St.; Troy, MT 59935 – (406)-295-9238

June 2007

Vermiculite in Libby



For several decades, vermiculite was commonly used in and around homes in Lincoln County for a variety of applications, including as a soil additive, construction aggregate, and attic insulation.

If vermiculite is present, it might contain Libby Amphibole (LA) asbestos, which may be more toxic than other varieties. Exposure to LA could lead to such serious diseases as asbestosis, lung cancer, or mesothelioma. It will take several years for EPA to complete its cleanup, and workers might encounter vermiculite during that time, even after EPA has finished its work. It is not possible for EPA to remove (or to even know about) *all* the vermiculite in the area. In some cases, vermiculite might be intentionally left in sealed walls, home foundations, and other relatively inaccessible areas. Remodeling, repair, electrical, or plumbing work might uncover vermiculite that was otherwise sealed in place. **Always ask the homeowner if they know where you might find vermiculite.**

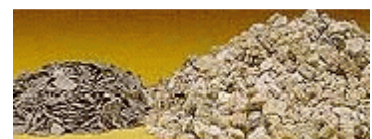
It is possible that you might unexpectedly find vermiculite after starting your work, perhaps by cutting into a wall (drill a pilot test hole first) or uncovering something that EPA or the homeowner did not know about. **EPA strongly cautions you not to work with vermiculite or disturb it any way.**

Improper work practices can contaminate the interior of the home or building where you are working! It is your responsibility to know the state and local laws and regulations.

Precautionary Steps to Take So You Can Get On With Your Job

If you encounter vermiculite, it is likely that you will be exposed to Libby Amphibole asbestos. If you choose to continue working, take the following minimal steps:

1. **Always notify the resident.** If they haven't already told you about it, they might not know.
2. **For a small quantity**, such as a handful of vermiculite, use a damp paper towel to scoop up the material into a sealable plastic bag or jar. Then use another damp towel to wipe down the area. Place the used paper towels in the container and throw everything away in a proper receptacle (a covered trashcan is OK).
3. **Never vacuum vermiculite with a regular vacuum.** HEPA filter vacuums are effective on small quantities of vermiculite. Residents who have had a cleanup done should have a HEPA vacuum. If you do not have access to a HEPA vacuum, call the EPA Information Center.
4. **For larger quantities** of vermiculite, such as what you might find in a breached wall, **do not disturb the material. Do not vacuum large amounts of vermiculite - even with a HEPA vacuum. Isolate and cover the area and call the Environmental Resource Specialist (ERS) immediately.**
5. **No matter the volume or location of known or suspected vermiculite, contact the ERS.** Please notify the ERS early to protect yourself and your workers and to ensure the most appropriate action is taken.



Raw and Popped Vermiculite Ore

Libby Asbestos might be considerably more toxic than other commercial asbestos products. It should be avoided or handled with extreme care. Exposure to Libby Amphibole asbestos has resulted in disease in workers and non-workers who have had contact with contaminated materials. Take care not to bring any contaminated clothing or material back to your home or business. Treat any asbestos containing material as regulated material and comply with all state and local regulations. The health risk from exposure to **all** asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. **There is no known threshold risk level for asbestos-related materials, and any exposure will increase the risk of asbestos-related disease.** If you take the basic precautions outlined in this fact sheet, work on your project will be much safer.

Common dust or surgical masks are not effective against asbestos fibers! Wearing a respirator with a HEPA filter is the best way to avoid breathing asbestos fibers. However, they must be used properly or exposure may still occur. For information on respirator requirements, visit OSHA's website:
www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection.



Who Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos?

EPA Information Center - (406) 293-6194
DEQ Troy Information Center – 295-9238
ERS – (406) 291-5335

The EPA, the ERS, or DEQ might send personnel out to inspect a situation involving vermiculite or LA. That guidance might include advising the owner to allow EPA or a licensed asbestos contractor or inspector to take samples, conduct cleanup, or take other special measures to reduce the risk of asbestos exposure. A list of licensed contractors and inspectors can be found at the Information Centers.

Montana Department of Environmental Quality - Asbestos Control Program (406) 444-5300

Montana law requires that employers hire a licensed inspector to determine if asbestos is present before doing any work. Asbestos that is not associated with the Libby vermiculite mine is still regulated by the Montana DEQ. If non-Libby asbestos is found, it should be dealt with according to Montana regulations. Explore Montana DEQ's Asbestos web site at: www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos

Please learn about the risks of asbestos exposure and basic precautions by reviewing the fact sheets available at the **Information Centers** listed above or the website listed below:

- **HEPA Vacuum Cleaner Program – May 2007.** Provides information on the effectiveness of HEPA vacuums and describes their role in Libby's cleanup.
- **Lincoln County Do-It-Yourselfers – June 2007.**
- **Contractors & Tradesmen Working Outdoors – June 2007.**
- **Explore the EPA web site and its links at: www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby**